

**Vale District Bureau of Land Management
Mountain Pasture Temporary Fence
Allotment Two (10201)
Environmental Assessment
EA No. OR-030-04-012**

Decision Record

This Decision Record documents my decision to select the proposed alternative to authorize the construction of approximately 3.0 miles of temporary electric fence in the Mountain Pasture of Allotment #2. The purpose of the fence is to separate the pasture into two individual livestock use areas in order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and maintain genetic integrity of livestock owned by individual permittees. In addition, construction of the proposed 3.0 miles of fence may ensure that individual permittees would have the opportunity to herd their livestock away from critical riparian and wildlife habitat areas within their individual use areas. The temporary fence would be in place for a two year period (2004 and 2005) and charged for a 60 day period within each year (i.e. 5/15-7/15). This action was analyzed in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA OR-030-04-012). This proposed action is tiered to and is consistent with the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision dated September 2002, and the Bully Creek Landscape Area Management Project dated March 2000 which are the land use plans for Allotment #2 in the Malheur Resource Area. Additionally, it is consistent with the Malheur County Land Use Plan, and BLM policy. The following mitigation measure will be implemented to minimize negative impacts to public land resource values:

1. Fence materials, tools and labor will be transported to the site by all terrain vehicles (ATV), horseback, or on foot.
2. No blading of fence lines and or existing roads will occur within the project area.
3. The fence will only be charged during the 60 day livestock use period (i.e.5/15- 7 115) for each year (2004 and 2005).

My decision is to authorize construction of the temporary electric fence as above and assign maintenance of the rangeland project to livestock operators authorized to graze livestock in Allotment #2 by way of a cooperative agreement (Form 4120-6).

Tom Dabbs
Field Manager
Malheur Resource Area

Date

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Finding of No Significant Impact

The Malheur Resource Area of the Bureau of Land Management, Vale District has analyzed a proposal to construct 3.0 miles of temporary electric fence within the Mountain Pasture of Allotment Number Two. The analysis included a no action alternative. Based on the following summary of consequences and as discussed in the environmental assessment, I have determined that implementation of the proposed action will continue to meet resource management objectives defined in the Bully Creek Landscape Area Management Project and the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision which constitute the land use plans for Allotment #2 in the Malheur Resource Area. The spread of infectious diseases and the maintenance of genetic integrity within individual livestock herds among individual livestock permittees has been an issue of concern in the Bully Creek Watershed Area. The proposed fence would separate two of the three permittees that currently graze together into separate use areas within the Mountain Pasture of Allotment #2. In addition, construction of the proposed 3.0 miles of fence may ensure that individual permittees would have the opportunity to herd their livestock away from critical riparian areas and wildlife habitat areas within their individual use areas. The fence would be in place for a two year period (2004 and 2005) and be charged for a 60 day grazing period for each year.

Impacts to critical elements of the human environment, including ten points of potential significance identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b), are not determined to be in excess of limits requiring the development of an environmental impact statement. Negative impacts to desired perennial vegetation communities and thus watershed stability are not anticipated to increase with the proposed action. As a result, on the basis of the information contained in this environmental assessment and all other information available, it is my determination that the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and that an environmental impact statement is not required.

s/Tom Dabbs

April 29, 2004

Tom Dabbs
Field Manager
Malheur Resource Area

Date

Vale District Bureau of Land Management
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Table of Contents

1 Purpose of and Need for Action	5
2 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action.....	5
2.1 <i>Proposed Action</i>	5
2.2 <i>No Action Alternative</i>	6
2.3 <i>Alternatives Considered Although not Analyzed</i>	6
3 Affected Environment	6
3.1 <i>Vegetation, Soils and Watershed</i>	6
3.2 <i>Special Status Plants</i>	7
3.3 <i>Noxious Weeds</i>	7
3.4 <i>Livestock Grazing</i>	7
3.5 <i>Wildlife and Fish</i>	8
3.6 <i>Recreation and Visual Resources</i>	9
3.7 <i>Riparian Values</i>	9
3.8 <i>Climate/Topography</i>	10
3.9 <i>Other Mandatory Elements</i>	10
4 Environmental Consequences	10
4.1 <i>Proposed Action Alternative</i>	11
4.1.1 <i>Vegetation, Soils and Watershed</i>	11
4.1.2 <i>Special Status Plants</i>	11
4.1.3 <i>Noxious Weeds</i>	11
4.1.4 <i>Livestock Grazing</i>	11
4.1.5 <i>Wildlife and Fish</i>	12
4.1.6 <i>Recreation and Visual Resources</i>	12
4.1.7 <i>Riparian Values</i>	12
4.2 <i>No Action Alternative</i>	13
4.2.1 <i>Vegetation, Soils and Watersheds</i>	13
4.2.2 <i>Special Status Plants</i>	13
4.2.3 <i>Noxious Weeds</i>	13
4.2.4 <i>Livestock Grazing</i>	13
4.2.5 <i>Wildlife and Fish</i>	13
4.2.6 <i>Recreation and Visual Resources</i>	13
4.2.7 <i>Riparian Values</i>	14

5 Adverse Effects.....	14
6 Short Term and Long Term Impacts.....	14
7 Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitment of Resources	14
8 Mitigating Measures	14
9 List of Preparers	15
9.1 <i>List of Agencies, Organizations, and Persons to Whom Copies of the EA are Sent</i>	15
9.2 <i>Literature Cited</i>	15

1 Purpose of and Need for Action

Three livestock operators are authorized to graze livestock within Allotment #2. These operators graze cattle and are dependent on fences to define pasture boundaries and implement sound grazing schedules designed to meet resource management objectives as identified in the Bully Creek Landscape Area Management Project (LAMP) dated March 2000. The Mountain Pasture is the largest pasture within the allotment comprising 11,263 acres and is currently grazed in common by three permittees.

In 1998 and 1999, an assessment of the five Standards for Rangeland Health (SRH) for Allotment Number Two was completed. The assessment revealed that SRH were not being met in most pastures and in some pastures livestock management had been a contributing factor to the non-attainment of these Standards. The Bully Creek (LAMP) was issued in March of 2000, addressing several alternatives, and identifying a preferred alternative that would make significant progress toward meeting the Standards. A Decision implementing the LAMP was issued on September 28, 2000 and new grazing schedules were implemented in 2001. From 2001 to 2003, field monitoring data had been collected from all pastures within the Allotment. An assessment of the field monitoring data was completed during the winter of 2003 and 2004 and a new grazing schedule was developed based upon an analysis of the data. In addition, in order to maintain the genetic integrity of individual livestock herds and prevent the spread of infectious diseases among herds within the community grazed Mountain Pasture, a temporary electric fence was proposed by the permittees to separate the 11,263 acre pasture into two separate pastures (i.e. west and east). The location of the fence (see attached map) was primarily based upon the allocation of authorized active AUMs to the three permittees that graze in the Allotment; JR Land and Livestock (ie Richard Jordan), Alves Land and Livestock (Jim Alves) and Calvin Haueter are authorized 61 %,36% and 3% of the AUMs, respectively.

In conjunction with the proposed fence, a temporary reduction in livestock use was proposed and agreed upon by the permittees for the Mountain pasture with 1/2 the livestock numbers or time being authorized for the three permittees for 2004 and 2005. Alves would graze the proposed West Mountain pasture and Jordan and Haueter would graze on the proposed East side of the pasture. In addition, construction of the proposed 3.0 miles of fence may ensure that individual permittees would have the opportunity to herd their livestock away from critical riparian and wildlife habitat areas within their individual use areas.

The proposed actions implemented to construct the fence and implement a new grazing schedule for the pasture was agreed upon cooperatively between BLM and livestock operators and implementation of a cooperative agreement for the maintenance of a rangeland project (form 4120-6).

2 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

This section describes the proposed action and the no action alternative. An alternative to exclude livestock use in the Mountain Pasture was considered but not analyzed as described in section.2.3.

2.1 *Proposed Action*

The proposed temporary electric fence would be approximately 3.0 miles in length and begin at the SW corner of the Cottonwood Exclosure (SENE section 8 T17S R42E) and run in a southwesterly and southerly direction through portions of sections 17, 18, 20 and end in the NENE section 19. See attached map for location of the proposed electric fence. A three or four strand (one hot and two or three ground) electric fence would be constructed with a gate at each end and at the road intersection in section 18. Fence specifications and wire spacing would be consistent with BLM standards for habitat utilized by deer, pronghorn and elk (BLM Manual 1737). Consistent with other pasture boundary fences within the Vale BLM District, the permittees would be responsible for the maintenance of the fence and a Cooperative Agreement form (Form 4120-6) would be signed by the permittees.

In addition, a revised grazing schedule with one-half the average actual use (either in time or numbers) of livestock use was agreed upon by BLM and the three permittees for the allotment. The proposed temporary fence would be in place for 2004 and 2005 and would be charged for a 60 day period (May 15-July 15) for each year.

2.2 No Action Alternative

The Mountain Pasture would not be divided into two pastures (i.e. an East Mountain Pasture and West Mountain Pasture) and livestock permittees would continue to graze in common with the potential of spreading infectious diseases among individual permittee livestock herds and the inability for livestock permittees to maintain genetic integrity of individual herds by grazing in common during the livestock breeding season. Livestock operators would continue to be faced with increased loss of genetic integrity among their individual herds and increased economic losses due to detecting and treating infectious diseases. The opportunities for individual permittees to herd their own livestock away from critical riparian and wildlife areas within their own use areas would not exist under this alternative.

2.3 Alternatives Considered Although not Analyzed

The Bureau did not develop additional alternatives beyond the proposed action and the no action alternatives. Alternatives to exclude livestock use in the Mountain Pasture to protect resource values were considered but not analyzed. Excluding livestock grazing from Allotment #2 could also be considered although a no grazing alternative and an alternative with a significant reduction in grazing were analyzed in the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan EIS and not selected for the Record of Decision. As a result, those alternatives would not be further analyzed.

3.0 Affected Environment

This section presents information on relevant resource components of the existing environment.

3.1 Vegetation, Soils and Watershed

Vegetation in the Mountain Pasture consists of shrub steppe plant communities dominated by sagebrush species and bunchgrasses. The vegetation type which covers the majority of the pasture is dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp wyomingensis*) with an understory of perennial grass species, primarily bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), Thurber's needle grass (*Stipa thurberiana*), basin wildrye (*Leymus cinereus*) and localized areas of cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*).

Soils are primarily of the gray desert group a silty clay loam or clay loam textured of volcanic origin. The ridges generally have shallow soils and rocky outcroppings, which increase with higher elevation. The hillsides and bottoms have deeper soils and some limited lower areas are very sandy.

The long term objective for the Mountain Pasture is to improve ecosite condition to attain middle ecological condition or DRFC1s. Apply wildlife (improve), upland (improve) objectives as described in the LAMP on pages 16 and 17.

The assessment results also showed that the upland watershed function, ecological processes and wildlife habitats were not functioning properly due to historic grazing in the native vegetation communities of the pasture (limited native grasses/forbs). Upland trends indicate the pasture was not meeting the upland objective (1/2 to 1 foot loss in bluebunch wheatgrass at one upland trend plot). Wildlife (deer and pronghorn winter range), weed invasion and erosion were issues of concern. Special status species (redband trout (*Oncophrynchus mykiss spp*) at the top of Cottonwood Creek; one sage grouse lek is located within the pasture and three additional leks lay within a two mile radius of the pasture) are issues of concern.

3.2 Special Status Plants

No plant species listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 are known to be present within the vicinity of the proposed fence location.

3.3 Noxious Weeds

Whitetop or hoary cress (*Cardaria spp.*), a perennial noxious weed is present, especially adjacent to roads and other routes of seed distribution. Whitetop is considered a Class C2 weed due to its abundance; however, it is controlled when found in isolated spots within previously non-infested areas. Bur buttercup (*Ranunculus testiculatus*), a low growing annual forb, also occurs within lower elevations of the pasture and is considered a low priority weed and not in the county weed classification system. Medusahead (*Taeniatherum caput_medusae*), an aggressive annual grass, is present at limited sites with clay layers present in the soil. Noxious weed distribution in the pasture is more significant at lower elevation within areas of greater historic livestock impacts. Noxious weed presence is sparse in areas dominated by healthy perennial species such as those adjacent to the rims and higher elevations of the pasture.

3.4 Livestock Grazing

Allotment #2 is a community allotment with individual use areas in most pastures (except for the Mountain Pasture) and is located east of Westfall, Oregon. The allotment is within the sagebrush steppe vegetative zone in the northern most fringe of the Owyhee Uplands physiographic province. The allotment comprises a total of 48,499 acres of public land and 7,665 acres of private land. There are a total of 7,480 AUMs of active use and 1,320 AUMs of suspended use with a total active preference of 8,800 AUMs. The average actual use for the Mountain Pasture the past 15 years has been 2,247 AUMs.

In 1998 the Bully Creek LAMP was initiated. The purpose of the LAMP was to assess ecosystems and resource values on a broad watershed base scale. Allotment number 2 was an allotment assessed in the watershed. The assessment was similar to the allotment evaluation process previously used in the rangeland management program to evaluate whether or not livestock grazing management was meeting resource objectives. Specifically, the assessment analyzed data to determine conformance with the Standards for Rangeland Health as implemented in Oregon and Washington.

As a result of the assessment new grazing schedules were implemented in 2001 and grazing schedule adjustments were made within those pastures not meeting Standards 1-5. The new grazing schedules were monitored from 2001 to 2003 and field monitoring data was analyzed and evaluated in 2004 with a new proposed grazing schedule implemented for 2004 and 2005. During the 2004 evaluation, it was also identified by livestock permittees that the spread of infectious diseases and the maintenance of genetic integrity were issues within the community grazed Mountain pasture. Individual livestock use areas were requested within the Mountain Pasture. The proposed grazing schedule for 2004 and 2005 is shown below for the Allotment as a result of the 2004 evaluation. Adjustments in grazing schedules can be implemented through the adaptive management strategy as defined on page 9 of the LAMP and specified as a term and condition on livestock permittee's term permit and annual grazing authorization.

Table 1. Shows the proposed grazing schedule for 2004 and 2005

Pasture	2004	2005
North Bully Creek	4/15-6/01	4/15-6/01
Wildhorse	8/10-10/31	8/10-10/31
North NG	7/10-8/10	7/10-8/10
South NG	4/01-5/15	4/01-5/15
Mountain!	5/15-7/15	5/15-7/15
Harper Seeding	8/01-10/31	8/01-10/31
Mesa Brush Control	8/01-10/31	8/01-10/31
Bully Creek Seeding	rest	rest
Holding	7/15-8/01	7/15-8/01
Dry Creek	7/15-8/01	7/15-8/01
Rocke	6/01-6/10	6/01-6/10

1. Graze in common with adjoining permittee (half the numbers for Alves and half the time for Jordan and Haueter)

3.5 Wildlife and Fish

The proposed area is within year long range for both mule deer and pronghorn antelope. Other wildlife species include neotropical migratory song birds, small mammals and reptiles. Guidelines that apply to sage grouse habitat are specified in the recent publication Management Guidelines for Greater Sage Grouse and Sagebrush-Steppe Ecosystems for Oregon and Washington. Due to long-term decline in sage grouse numbers across the West the need for additional Federal protection of this species is being reviewed. Initiation of various management actions (i.e. limit livestock utilization to 40% of annual growth of perennial plants) within the Bully Creek area should contribute to the improvement of sage grouse habitat and may reduce the future need for listing under the Endangered Species Act. During the LAMP assessment, sage grouse nesting habitat was identified as issues of concern in the Mountain Pasture. There are no known wildlife species listed as threatened and endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 in the allotment or the pasture.

Bureau Sensitive, Assessment, and Tracking species which may use habitats available in the pasture include western toad, ferruginous hawk, loggerhead shrike, western burrowing owl, western sage grouse, pygmy rabbit, desert horned lizard, Mohave black-collared lizard, and northern sagebrush lizard. Little information is currently available on numbers and distribution of these species.

Redband/rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss ssp*) occur in the upper reaches of Cottonwood Creek within the Mountain Pasture, where pools and lower water temperatures provide some refuge through most of the year.

3.6 Recreation and Visual Resources

Dispersed outdoor recreation in the proposed project area consists primarily of off hi-way vehicle usage and hunting of upland birds and big game animals.

Some dispersed general sightseeing occurs. The allotment is within a visual resource management class IV where potential projects are designed to conform to the characteristic landscape for the pasture. The objective of Class IV is to provide for management activities that require major modification of the landscape. These management activities may dominate the view and become the focus of viewer attention. However, every effort should be made to minimize the impact of these projects by carefully locating activities, minimizing disturbances, and designing potential projects to conform to the characteristic landscape.

3.7 Cultural Resources

Prehistoric-The proposed area has long been inhabited by the Northern Paiute peoples. Their technology was effective and efficient, utilizing many multi-functional, light-weight and expendable tools adapted for a desert culture. Gathering activities are attested to by digging sticks, carrying baskets, and milling stones, and hunting is represented by the atlatl and dart, bow and arrow, stone projectile points, stone knives and scrapers. Cultural resources associated with the prehistoric use of this project area consists of rock art; rock shelters; rock structures (cairns, alignments, etc.); habitation sites around springs; small camps at stream-side meadows and on alluvial deposits at junctions of tributary streams; quarries of fine-grained basalt, obsidian, chalcedony and jasper; flaking stations on high points with good vantage; and sacred sites.

Historic-Cultural resources associated with the historic use of this area are tied to landforms as transportation corridors: wagon roads, historic homesteads, early irrigation project features, early mining activity areas, and remains of stage and telegraph stations. Exploration into this area by white Europeans began in the early 1830s. In 1845, Stephen Meek guided a train of 214 wagons up the Malheur into central Oregon. The route of Meek's Cutoff crosses through the landscape area, heading west from Vale to Harper, then north to Westfall and continuing westward. When miners searching for gold in the area were unsuccessful, they turned to farming and livestock production, particularly in the lower valleys, grassy hills and the many drainages that eventually flowed into the Malheur River. The Ontario to Burns Freight Road, in operation from 1844-1913, headed northwest out of Westfall. Hanna Stage Station is located on this road.

Paleontology-At present, there are no identified locations of fossil flora or fauna within the Mountain Pasture. However, the exploration for fossil localities has been limited, and would probably be confined to Pliocene, Miocene or Pleistocene age soils. Sediments associated with old lake beds may contain plant, fish or marine animal remains since they have been located in similar old lake sediments at Beulah Reservoir and south of Vale.

3.8 Riparian Values

A 1999 rangeland health assessment revealed there is a need to improve 9.0 miles of streamside riparian areas within the Mountain pasture. The riparian area assessment showed .75 miles non-functioning, 3.75 miles functioning at risk downward trend, 4.5 miles functioning at risk with no apparent trend, and 1.0 miles functioning at risk with an upward trend within the Mountain pasture. The riparian watershed function was not functioning properly due to current and historic grazing (season of use), a road running through a riparian area, and impacts from big game (aspen and mountain shrub stands declining).

There are three identified riparian areas in the pasture: NG Creek, Cottonwood Creek and East Prong Dry Creek. Redband trout have been found in Cottonwood Creek. There are riparian exclosures on both Cottonwood and NG Creeks. Cottonwood, NG and East Prong Dry have reaches characteristic of perennial streams with moderate gradients. Aspen stands are found along NG Creek and East Prong Dry Creek. Woody riparian species along Cottonwood Creek include a variety of willow species with some mockorange. There are also several springs/seep areas not identified in the LAMP that currently being impacted.

3.9 Climate/Topography

The topography is broken rimrock and deep canyons with flat to rolling mesas. Cottonwood Creek canyon splits the Mountain pasture approximately in half. Elevation ranges from 3,700 at the south end of the pasture to 6,200 at the north end. The lower 1/3 of the pasture is characterized by rolling hills and benches with some steep drainages such as NG and Cottonwood Creeks that run North and South in the pasture. The upper 2/3 of the allotment is more mountainous with steeper terrain. East Prong Dry Creek is a steep drainage that runs North and South through the west side of the pasture. There are 45,798 public acres in the allotment of which 11,263 acres are within the Mountain Pasture.

The long term average precipitation within the area is twelve inches. Much of the precipitation occurs from November through February, with about one third falling as snow. High intensity thunderstorms, occasionally accompanied by hail, occur between April and September. Generally, the last spring frost occurs by May 30 and the first frost occurs by September 2. The frost-free period varies with elevation but averages 139 days.

Precipitation occurs primarily as snow fall during the winter with occasional mid-summer thunder storms. Climate and topography would not be affected by the proposed action or the no action alternative. No further analysis of climate or topography will be completed.

3.10 Other Mandatory Elements

The following mandatory elements are either not present or would not be affected by the proposed action or alternatives:

- . Air Quality
- . Water Quality
- . Native American Religious Concerns
- . Wild and Scenic Rivers
- . Hazardous Wastes
- . Prime or Unique Farmlands
- . Wetlands Flood Plains
- . Environmental Justice
- . Actions to Expedite Energy-Related Projects (Executive Order No. 13212 of May 18, 2001)
- . WSAs/ACECs

4 Environmental Consequences

This chapter is organized by alternatives to show the differences between the proposed action and the no action alternatives.

4.1 Proposed Action Alternative

The proposed action of constructing approximately 3.0 miles of temporary electric fence to separate the Mountain Pasture into two individual use areas to enhance livestock herd health and maintain genetic integrity for individual herds of livestock would result in the following anticipated consequences.

4.1.1 Vegetation, Soils and Watershed

The proposed fence construction would result in limited direct impact to vegetation communities as a result of soils disturbance required to drive posts and string wire. Blading of a route for fence construction would not be allowed although some shrubs may be trimmed to allow wire passage. Impacts to vegetation resources to deliver materials to the site would be negligible, whether completed with an all terrain vehicle (ATV) or packed on horses. Direct impacts to vegetation, soils and watershed values would recover short term, one to three growing season following fence construction. Cattle concentration adjacent to the new fence would increase impacts to vegetation resources short term until animals discover the newly established trails within each individual use area within the pasture.

Long term impacts to soils and watershed values within upland vegetation communities should improve from those which have occurred in recent years, as analyzed in 2004 Bully Creek LAMP evaluation. The intensity of livestock use would be ½ as much as previously used as recommended and agreed upon by livestock permittees.

4.1.2 Special Status Plants

Special status plant species would not be affected by the proposed actions. Timely field inventories of areas adjacent to the site of the proposed fence construction would be completed prior to the initiation of work to ensure that special status or habitat would not be impacted. The project layout would be modified as appropriate to avoid impacts to any special status species plants or habitats found or the project would be terminated if impacts could not be mitigated.

4.1.3 Noxious Weeds

Ground disturbance and dispersal of noxious weeds and undesirable species is anticipated to be little changed with proposed fence construction. Minimal foot, horse and A TV traffic with associated ground disturbance during construction and maintenance of the fence would slightly increase risk for dispersal of weed seed and other undesirable plant materials along roads and routes of access as well as the area of project construction. The anticipated increase in noxious weed presence or dominance due to fence construction is small with limited cumulative consequences when added to existing threats. Introduction of weed species by horses and A TV s used during construction would be insignificant when added to existing livestock management actions. The need for periodic surveys and treatment of sites invaded by noxious weed species would be relatively unchanged.

4.1.4 Livestock Grazing

Established levels of livestock grazing use authorized within the Mountain Pasture would be supported by the 2004 livestock agreement whereby Jordan, Alves and Haueter would take ½ AUM reduction in time and numbers for the 2004 and 2005 grazing seasons. Grazing schedules would be adjusted through the adaptive management process with the Mountain Pasture being grazed from 5/15 to 7/15 for the 2004 and 2005 grazing seasons. Herd health issues and genetic integrity for individual herds would be enhanced between Alves and Jordan with implementation of the proposed action.

4.1.5 Wildlife and Fish

Negative impacts to wildlife would be minimal as a result of constructing the proposed fence. The potential for wildlife entanglement in additional fences would be increased, although strict adherence to BLM guidelines would continue to allow passage by many wildlife species. Proposed construction of the temporary fence is not anticipated to affect habitat quality negatively or positively other than increase accidental injury and death could occur should sage grouse fly into them when approaching or leaving riparian communities.

The temporary electric fence would only be charged for a 60 day period during the grazing season which should mitigate long term adverse effects of the fence on wildlife movement across the area.

Continued improvement of riparian habitats adjacent to Cottonwood Creek, NG and East Prong Dry Creek should occur from adherence to a revised grazing schedule at reduced livestock stocking rates. In addition, construction of the proposed 3.0 miles offence may ensure that individual permittees would have the opportunity to herd their livestock away from critical wildlife habitat areas within their individual use areas with Alves grazing the proposed West Mountain Pasture and Jordan grazing the East Mountain Pasture.

4.1.6 Recreation and Visual Resources

Recreation values would be little changed by the proposed construction of the 3.0 miles of temporary electric fence. Visual impacts resulting from the proposed actions would be consistent with the management objectives for VRM Class IV by designing potential projects to conform to the characteristic landscape. The activity to construct and maintain the proposed 3.0 miles offence would be limited. Change from the current situation would be very low and not attract additional attention when added to a number of existing fences and range improvement projects for livestock movement between pastures. Visual impacts from disturbance of vegetation and soil resources would be minimally changed from existing conditions on public lands within the area as a result of fence construction and would recover rapidly with the following growing season.

4.1.7 Cultural Resources

Cultural resources would not be affected by the proposed actions. A Class III cultural resource survey of the area of the proposed fence construction would be completed. Mitigation for any cultural or historic sites located would be completed by rerouting the proposed fence or other accepted methods.

4.1.8 Riparian Values

The primary management objectives to improve riparian habitat adjacent to springs and streams which were identified in the Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and the Bully Creek LAMP, was to achieve proper functioning condition, attain water quality standards, and to provide suitable habitat for desirable terrestrial and aquatic species. Water developments, fencing, and implementation of appropriate livestock grazing schedules are expected to result in a more even distribution of livestock into upland vegetation communities, with fewer animals around perennial streams and resulting in improved water quality.

As identified above, riparian resources adjacent to Cottonwood Creek, NG and East Prong Dry Creek are scheduled to be protected from mid-summer to late summer grazing by implementation of a grazing schedule allowing spring and early summer use only at reduced stocking rates. In addition, construction of the proposed 3.0 miles offence may ensure that individual permittees would have the opportunity to herd their livestock away from critical riparian areas within their individual use areas.

Impacts to riparian vegetation communities adjacent to Cottonwood Creek, NG Creek and East Prong Dry Creek would be reduced through implementation of a new two year grazing schedule at a reduced stocking rate and provide for opportunities for livestock permittees to herd their livestock in their individual use areas.

4.2 No Action Alternative

Consequences of implementing the no action alternative, retention of the existing situation with livestock permittees grazing in common within the Mountain Pasture of Allotment #2, would result as summarized in the following sections.

4.2.1 Vegetation, Soils and Watersheds

The no action alternative would impact vegetation, soil, and watershed resources in no other ways than those that are currently occurring. Localized impacts to riparian vegetation adjacent to Cottonwood Creek, NO and East Prong Dry Creek would continue and the opportunity for individual herding within individual use areas by livestock permittees would not exist.

4.2.2 Special Status Plants

The no action alternative would likely have no effect on special status plants since no known habitats supporting identified species are present in the vicinity of the Mountain Pasture in Allotment #2.

4.2.3 Noxious Weeds

The no action alternative would not change noxious weed distribution or dominance in ways other than those currently occurring. Localized soil disturbance and existing vectors of distribution of noxious weed plant material, including those associated with livestock grazing, would continue. The need for continued surveys and localized treatment would continue.

4.2.4 Livestock Grazing

Livestock management would continue as specified in the Livestock Agreement for Allotment #2 as a result of the 2004 Bully Creek LAMP evaluation. Reduced stocking rates and early season would occur in the short-term. Problems associated with grazing in common including spread of infectious diseases and inability to maintain genetic integrity would continue to exist within the Mountain Pasture. Permittees would not be able to manage their own herds within their individual use areas and sensitive riparian areas and critical wildlife habitat areas would be more susceptible to overuse.

4.2.5 Wildlife and Fish

Overall wildlife habitat values would remain unchanged with no additional direct impacts to wildlife species. Critical wildlife and fish habitat areas within the Mountain Pasture would continue to be impacted as a result of continual in common grazing. In addition, potential adverse impacts to big game and sage grouse caused by additional fencing would be avoided.

4.2.6 Recreation and Visual Resources

The no action alternative would retain current recreation opportunities and visual resources quality. Continual adverse impacts to riparian wildlife and fish habitat caused by an in common livestock use area in the Mountain Pasture without opportunities for individual herding would result in indirect impacts to recreation opportunities for hunting and other dispersed recreation.

4.2.7 Cultural Resources

The no action alternative would not affect cultural resources in ways other than are currently occurring. Existing direct impacts to cultural resources from livestock concentration would continue.

4.2.8 Riparian Values

Early-summer authorized grazing should enhance the recovery of riparian communities planned within the 2004 Bully Creek Lamp Evaluation and Livestock Use Agreement that allows for a reduced stocking rate within the Mountain Pasture. Individual livestock herding within individual use areas would not occur and livestock impacts to stream banks and channels would continue to impair water quality and associated values of healthy riparian vegetation communities.

5 Adverse Effects

Unavoidable adverse effects from implementation of the proposed or no action alternative are limited to those impacts to soils, vegetation and riparian function described in the text above. Economic impacts are limited to funds necessary to construct and maintain the proposed fence or those resources necessary to increase livestock management and herding activities in the absence of the proposed fence.

6 Short Term and Long Term Impacts

Short-term impacts to vegetation resources during construction of the temporary electric fence would be offset by the long-term improvement of herd health and maintenance of genetic integrity within individual herds and long term benefits to riparian resources including wildlife habitat and watershed stability associated with livestock herding management within individual use areas.

Although a reduction in livestock use has been agreed upon for the 2004 and 2005 grazing season, it is doubtful that the short term change of grazing use and subsequent impact to local or regional economies is significant as a result of the proposed action or no action alternatives.

7 Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

In the event that implementation of the proposed actions are found to not meet current land use plan objectives identified in the SEORMP or the Bully Creek LAMP, revised grazing schedules could be implemented with no irreversible or irretrievable loss of resources. Similarly, should the proposed fence not function as expected to enhance the barrier to livestock movement, should it have unforeseen negative impacts, it could be removed or redesigned with no irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

8 Mitigating Measures

Based on BLM staff input, the following mitigating actions would be implemented to minimize undesired negative impacts of implementing the proposed action:

1. Fence materials, tools and labor would be transported to the site by all terrain vehicles (ATV), horseback, or on foot.
2. No blading offence lines and or existing roads will occur within the project area.
3. The fence will only be charged during the 60 day livestock use period (5/15-7/15).

9 List of Preparers

Steve Christensen	Rangeland Management Specialist Outdoor Recreation Planner, Wilderness Botanist
Bob Alward	Outdoor Recreation Planner, Wilderness
Jean Findley	Botanist
Diane Pritchard	Archaeologist
Shaney Rockefeller	Hydrologist/Soil Specialist
Brandon Knapton	Wildlife Biologist
Cynthia Tait	Fisheries Biologist
Lynne Silva	Range Technician, Weeds
Jon Freeman	Realty Specialist
Tom Hilken	Planning and Environmental Coordinator
Tom Dabbs	Field Manager
Jon Westfall	Malheur Resource Area Geologist

9.1 List of Agencies, Organizations, and Persons to Whom Copies of the EA are Made Available

Jim Alves, Livestock Operator; Allotment #2
Dick Jordan, Livestock Operator; Allotment #2
Calvin Haueter, Livestock Operator; Allotment #2
Jon Marvel, Western Watersheds
Katie Fite, Committee for Idaho's High Desert
Walt Van Dyke, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Russ Hursh, Malheur County Court
Dean Adams, Tribal Chair, Bums Paiute
Hal Shepherd, Northwest Environmental Defense Center
Bob Moore, Interested Public
Jack Alexander, Range Consultant, Synergy Resource Solutions, Inc.

A file search completed April 09, 2004 identified no additional requests by members of the public to be considered an interested public for Allotment #2.

9.2 Literature Cited

USDI-BLM. 2004. Livestock Agreement for the Mountain Pasture in Allotment #2. On File. BLM-Vale District 2pp.

USDI-BLM. 2000. Bully Creek Landscape Area Management Project. BLM-Vale District.

USDI-BLM. 2000. Proposed Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (April 2001). U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Vale District, Oregon. 3 v.

USDI-BLM. 1997. Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Management for Public Lands Administered by the BLM in the States of Oregon and Washington. 22pp.

MOUNTAIN PASTURE ALLOTMENT #2

Proposed Fence

